

REMARKS

The following remarks are responsive to the office action of May 9, 2003 and the interview of July 30, 2003. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claim 1 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by either Tobita, US Patent No. 5,669,239, or Burkett, US Patent No. 4,630,453. The Examiner has rejected claim 9 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tobita, in view of Burkett or Brumbach, US Patent No 1,201,549. The Examiner has rejected claim 10 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over either Tobita or Burkett, in view of Rissin, US Patent No. 5,906,114. The Examiner has rejected claim 14 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tobita in view of either Burkett or Brubach, and further in view of Rissin.

The Examiner has determined that claims 2-8, 11-13 and 15-17 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowed if amended to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant expresses appreciation to the Examiner for conducting the interview of July 30, 2003. In the interview, the Examiner and Applicant discussed the importance of having a pair of gripping fingers, the grips having a first and second end that extend in-line from the base plate, the grips being offset ninety degrees from a pair of spring fingers, where the grips have an inward bend

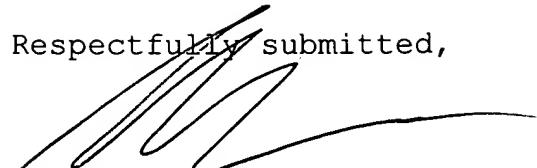
to facilitate gripping and removal or replacement of a clasp on the post.

The Examiner stated that these limitations, if inserted into the claims, would distinguish the claims over the cited art and, subject to a search, render the claims patentable over the prior art. Applicant has amended claim 1 to recite these limitations. Accordingly, Applicant asserts that claim 1, and claims 2-8 and 10-13, depending from claim 1, are patentable. Applicant has also amended claim 9 to overcome the prior art, and asserts that claims 14-17, depending on claim 9, are patentable.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully asserts that the claims are now in condition for allowance and requests a notice of allowance.

Please charge any additional fees to Deposit Account  
No. 06-0515.

Respectfully submitted,



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